

Department of Public Health, Sangamon County, Illinois

Program Overview: Sangamon County (population 189,000) is located in central Illinois and includes the state capital, Springfield. The county's Department of Public Health organizes periodic drop-off days for household hazardous waste. In 2007, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency offered to fund transportation and disposal of non-controlled medicines collected through county-organized HHW collections. As a result, Sangamon County was able to add medicines to the list of substances it accepted at its spring 2007 collection.

The event was publicized via ads in the Springfield newspaper as well as rural Sangamon County papers. Event organizers also placed a 60-second radio ad promoting the HHW event and highlighting the fact that unwanted medicines would also be accepted. For the radio spot, they selected the most popular local radio station that attracts 25-and-older listeners (an [mp3 audio file](#) of Sangamon County's radio ad is available in section 4 of the CD and online versions of this resource kit.) Additionally, Sangamon County used adaptations of the promotional flyer developed by the Earth Keeper initiative and the informational trifold brochure developed by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.

Volunteers put together bags of giveaways for participants. The bags included an informational brochure on medicine disposal, chip clip, pens/pencils, pill box, mercury-free thermometers, a schedule of clinic times and computer recycling information. Volunteers from Sangamon County Department of Public Health, the City of Springfield and University of Illinois-Springfield students helped staff the event.

The collection took place from 8 am to 3 pm on Saturday, April 21, 2007, coinciding with Earth Day. The medicine drop-off was separated from the rest of the HHW collection. Residents were instructed to place their medicines in separate clearly marked containers, which were collected by Illinois EPA's contractors. For the safety of event staff, all publicity materials for the event instructed residents not to bring needles or sharps for disposal. After the collection, Illinois EPA's contractors took the medicines to an approved incinerator for disposal.

Collection Site: The State Fairgrounds served as the drop-off point for medicines and all other household hazardous waste. The last ten HHW collections have been held here, so county residents have become accustomed to using this site and it typically provides good traffic flow and convenient location. In 2007, due to other events taking place at the State Fairgrounds, traffic was very busy.

Key Motivation: Organizers aimed to promote public health by protecting against accidental poisoning and drug abuse. They also aimed to prevent pollution of the region's waterways.

Organizing Body: Sangamon County Department of Public Health

Partners:

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Illinois Pharmacists Association
City of Springfield
University of Illinois-Springfield
Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant

Level of Implementation: The collection was organized at the county level.

Cost:

- Illinois EPA provided for the transportation and disposal of the collected medicine waste.
- Funding for printing flyers and brochures came through Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant. Sea Grant also sponsored Sangamon County's radio and newspaper ads promoting the collection (approximately \$2500 total).
- The Illinois Pharmacists Association assisted with distribution of flyers to all pharmacies and nursing homes within Sangamon County.
- Volunteers provided in-kind support by donating their time to staff the event.

Outcome: About 2,800 people dropped off items at the HHW collection in 2007, and about 300 of them brought medications for disposal. Approximately seven 55-gallon drums of medications were collected at the single-day event. This included 8 large shopping bags of medicine received from a retired disabled military veteran.

In 2008, nine 55-gallon drums of medicines were collected at the annual HHW collection that drew a combined 1,500 participants. In 2009, only medicines were collected at the event; 500 participants brought in enough medicines to fill 19 30-gallon drums.

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